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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002293

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/23/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: EVO THANKS DIPCORPS, ACCUSES USG

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary: President Evo Morales addressed the diplomatic community October 23, showering them with praise for helping him reach an October 21 compromise with the opposition on a draft constitution. Morales portrayed the compromise as a one-sided affair in which the radical opposition was forced to sign an agreement with his reasonable, internationally-supported government. Morales used the occasion to simultaneously thank missions for assistance while blasting U.S. assistance for "lack of transparency." Evo then launched a bizarre accusation that opposition radicals were receiving anti-tank weapons from the USG, specifically from DEA. After weathering the first round of Morales' verbal assault, The Charge' felt compelled to respond to this second baseless diatribe by countering that USG assistance is dedicated to helping Bolivians and bolstering democracy and any contention to the contrary was "totally false." The exchange visibly angered Evo. We heard later in the day that Morales is preparing a speech to blast us. End Summary.

Evo Thanks Missions/IOs for Support, Sans Uncle Sam  
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¶2. (C) President Evo Morales told the diplomatic community October 23 that he appreciated their support of the government's dialogue efforts with the opposition that culminated in an October 21 compromise on the text of a draft constitution and date for a constitutional referendum. Morales thanked the international community for its "critical" part as dialogue observers, which he claimed forced the heretofore intransigent opposition to compromise.

¶3. (C) Morales also thanked missions for international assistance, but took the opportunity to make exception for U.S. assistance programs, which are "not transparent" and of which "only 30 percent" goes to needy Bolivians. Evo lamented the current state of U.S. bilateral affairs and said he wanted "good" relations with us, but placed the onus on improving relations on restructuring U.S. assistance programs.

Evo to Dips: "Call Me"  
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¶4. (C) Morales then pledged to "make better use of you (diplomatic missions and international organizations)." He added that he appreciated advice from foreign missions and found such advice useful during negotiations with the opposition, but with the caveat that views be expressed privately to him directly, not through the media. "Call me with your complaints," said Morales.

Ah Shucks: International Community Takes Credit  
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¶5. (C) Various internal representatives then congratulated Morales on the compromise, including the Argentine, Russian, French, and South Korean mission representatives. The Chilean representative made a point to stress Unasur's role in the negotiations and its success in diffusing the organization's first political crisis in Bolivia.

From Left Field, Fresh Allegations of USG Conspiracy  
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¶6. (C) Morales told the group he hoped the constitutional compromise would serve as a springboard for increased opposition acceptance of the government's "change agenda." He then segued awkwardly into an accusation that the United States was supplying anti-tank weapons to opposition radicals in Beni and Pando departments (states). Morales said he had "reason to believe" the DEA was responsible for supplying the covert arms. He did not offer further details for the opposition group, the type of weapon, or the connection with the USG.

Battling Conspiracy Theories with Reality Check  
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¶7. (C) After the MFA official in charge of the microphone received permission to give the microphone to CDA, CDA responded to Morales charges. CDA began by congratulating the government, the opposition, and the Bolivian people for the constitutional compromise, which visibly irked Morales, who had tried to caste the compromise as a government victory throughout. CDA stated that the USG continues to desire improved relations, consistent with a long history of positive USG-Bolivian relations, and to continue a friendship with the Bolivian people. CDA refuted that USG assistance is used for any other purpose than to help promote democracy and improve the lives of Bolivians and that any allegations to the contrary "are totally false."

VP: Opposition Should "Join the March of History"  
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¶8. (C) Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera told the group that the government "has always said we were prepared to compromise." He relayed his satisfaction that the opposition had finally come around and agreed to negotiate, singling out opposition leader Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga for a left-handed compliment for "changing his mind at the last minute." Garcia Linera fully credited international observers for forcing the opposition to negotiate seriously, implying an agreement would not have been possible without them. He added that the opposition had committed a "fatal mistake" by resorting to violence in August and September. Garcia Linera also praised pressure from a large (estimated between 40,000 and 100,000) pro-government march on Congress to "help convince them (the opposition)" to come to an agreement. He hoped that the compromise would convince opposition militants in Santa Cruz Department to reconcile with the national government and "join the march of history." Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca also addressed the group.

Evo Shrugs Off CDA; Dark Clouds for USAID Meeting?  
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¶9. (C) As President Morales shook hands with diplomats after the event, CDA pulled him aside to mention that USAID would meet with Minister of Planning and Development Carlos

Villegas later the same day to discuss assistance programs and transparency. Morales, visibly upset, brushed off the comment, saying only that "the policy needs to change."  
(Comment: We understand that by the only "change" Morales will accept regarding development assistance is to hand money directly to the government/Evo. We will see if the exchange sours our pre-scheduled meeting on USAID's assistance programs with Minister Villegas today, October 23. We have also heard that Evo plans to blast the USG in a speech sometime between October 23-25. End Comment.)

Comment

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¶10. (C) Garcia Linera's characterization of a warm and fuzzy government that has always tried to be reasonable with a radical and intransigent opposition is utterly blind to the last year's worth of government strong-arm tactics to steamroll its will over democratic rules and institutions. The international community seems largely content to accept the government narrative, at least publicly. As the CDA noted, we too are pleased the government and opposition could come to a peaceful agreement regarding the draft constitution and at the role of the international community to facilitate such outcomes. However, we take issue with the use of obvious pressure tactics, such as the threat to unleash potential violent government supporters on the institution of Congress if the government did not get their way. The government's continued reference to these pressure tactics as legitimate instruments of democracy is unacceptable, as is lack of international criticism of such measures. Igniting dynamite at the door of the Congress is not harmless "celebration," as the government describes it, but a signal to opposition legislators inside to pass the government's agenda or else.

¶11. (C) Evo wins dual awards for most uncomfortable moment and most awkward bilateral attack at a multilateral event with his bizarre accusations about DEA-supplied anti-tank weapons. Evo's allegation is textbook Chavez: offer an innuendo and no proof, let fester, and allow the perception to linger without resolution. It goes without saying that no international representative bothered to defend us at the event, nor do we expect them to do so in the future. The irony that at the same event Morales called on diplomats to lodge their criticisms of his government privately through diplomatic channels seems lost on Evo himself. Attacks like these make it difficult to entertain seriously the oft-repeated government speaking point that it wants to improve relations with United States. End Comment.

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